POLAR BEAR DENNING SURVEY

Eskimo Point, 1978

Northwest Territories Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development

103-07029/

POLAR BEAR DENNING SURVEY

Eskimo Point, 1978

E.D. Fast

N.W.T. Wildlife Service

1980

Manuscript report 3

Contents of this paper may be used only with permission
of the N.W.T. Wildlife Service

ABSTRACT

A ground survey using snowmobiles was carried out in the area between Eskimo Point, N.W.T., and the Manitoba-N.W.T. border from March 17-20, 1978 to determine numbers, distribution and extent of female polar bear (Ursus maritimus) denning. No dens, tracks or bears were found during the survey. Polar bear denning is considered minimal to non-existent in this area.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

LIST OF FIGURES iii

INTRODUCTION 1

METHODS 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 5

APPENDIX I. Costs for 1978 Eskimo Point polar bear denning survey 6

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Probable polar bear denning areas and survey results - Eskimo Point area 2

INTRODUCTION

Little information was available on polar bear (Ursus maritimus) denning in the area south of Eskimo Point. The objective of our survey was to determine the extent to which female polar bears den in the area. The region with which we were concerned was approximately 2790 km^2 (Figure 1). We did ground surveys by snow machine in this area from 17-20 March 1978.

A probable denning area as proposed by C.W.S. encompassed a 3050^2 area immediately south of Eskimo Point heavily travelled by hunters and trappers from Eskimo Point. Snow machine activity is particularly heavy in the warmer winter months of March and April. With the amount of traffic in the area it was felt that positive reports would have been received if denning activity had been significant but the most successful hunters and trappers who travel the area stated that no denning has been observed during the past several years. For this reason, the emphasis of our survey was on the tundra landscape immediately south of that area (Figure 1).

D. Ayotte (Wildlife Officer, Rankin Inlet) did a denning survey along the Hudson Bay coastline from Eskimo Point to Nunalla from 30 March - 1 April 1975 (Figure 1). No sign of bear denning was found. Our survey covered areas along the coastline and inland approximately 30 km.

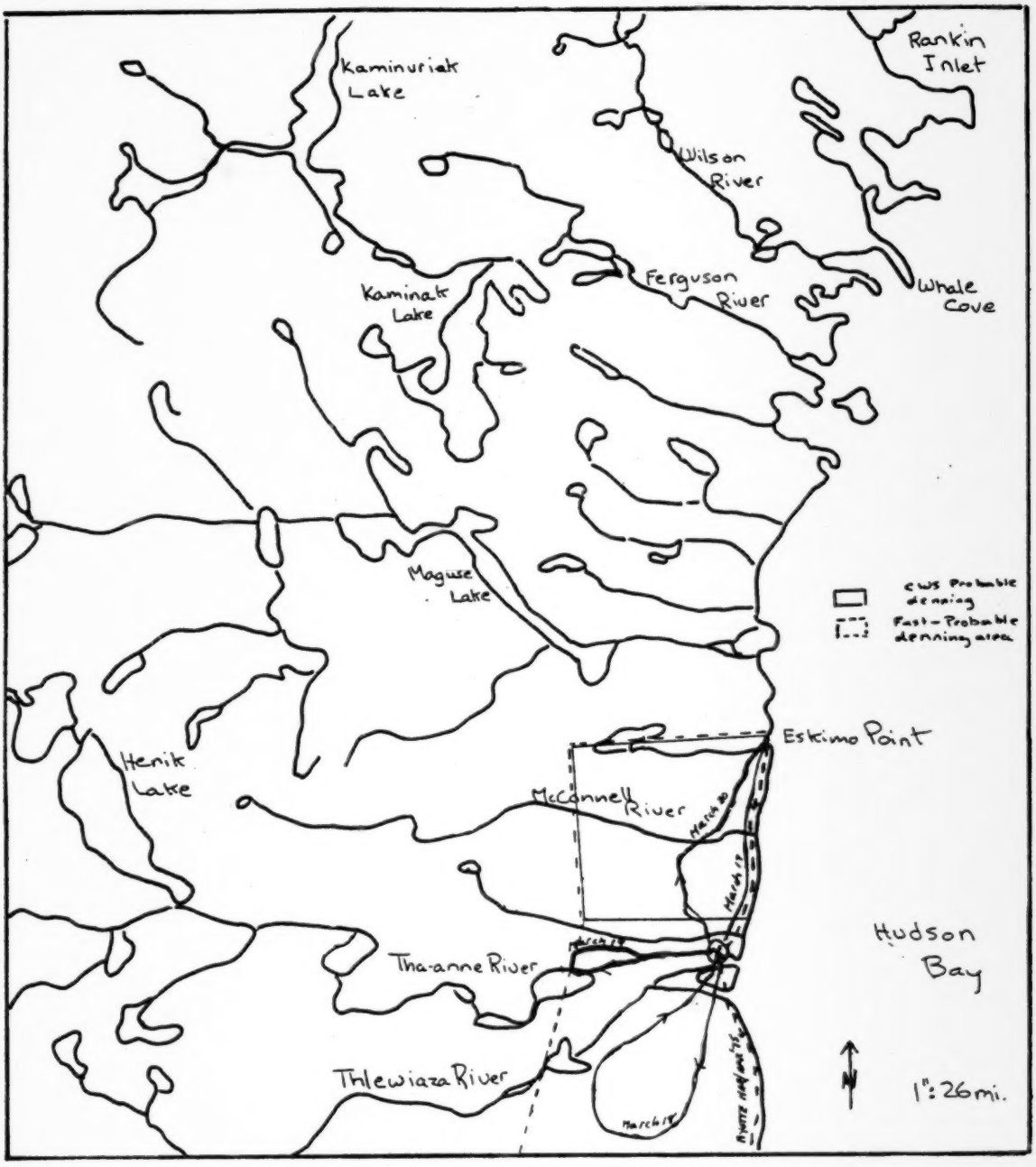

Figure 1. Probable polar bear denning areas and survey results - Eskimo Point area.

The study was a low budget survey conducted in conjunction with a caribou ground survey of the area. Because of the anticipated lack of denning in the area, priority funding this year was given to bear denning surveys at Wager Bay and Mansel Island.

METHODS

I was assisted on the survey by Tony Otuk of Eskimo Point. Two Skidoo snowmobiles and two komatiks were used for transportation.

The survey area occupied approximately 2790 km^2 and was bounded by the Tha-anne River, Hudson Bay coastline, Manitoba-N.W.T. border, and the Geillini, Ranger Seal, Hyde Lakes chain. Routes were plotted through the most probable denning areas on 1:250,000 contour maps. As much as possible we travelled along eskers, river valleys, outcrops and rolling terrain to scan the surrounding lowlands and coastline for bear movements and probable areas. We searched for polar bear tracks along the routes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although travel was carried out through many probable looking denning areas, no dens, tracks or polar bears were found in the area. It is unrealistic to state that no denning takes place in ths area, but we can assume it is not a significant polar bear denning area. D. Ayotte's 1975 survey showed similar conclusions.

The area should not be considered a priority area for future denning surveys and additional work should be done only if funds are readily available.

Appendix 1. Costs for 1978 Eskimo Point polar bear denning survey.

Wages:	Wildlife Officer	$ 325.00
	Guide	200.00
Gasoline:		100.00
Oil:		16.00
Naphtha:		30.00
Food:		50.00
Snowmobile repairs:		40.00
TOTAL		$ 761.00